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Meek and Lowly in Heart

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Series: The Fruit of the Spirit

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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THE STATE OF THE UNION

We live in a world where bigness is the norm and performance is the yardstick by which all of life is measured. Big business eats up little businesses as though they were pausing at Wendy's for lunch. Governments strive for bigger deficits, bigger armies, bigger programs. Churches govern their success by how big their buildings are, how many baptisms they have, how many services they have, and how many cars can park in their parking lot. Schools are looking for bigger enrollments; companies are looking for bigger budgets, bigger markets, and bigger market shares. In short, everything today is judged by how prominent it is, how big it is, and how impressive it is. In other words, everything is measured by how much tangible evidence there is of its own greatness.

Measured by those standards, the early church was a failure. Measured by those standards, Jesus didn't make it. Measured by those standards, Paul couldn't even have drafted an acceptable standard. With God, it isn't how intensive your resumé, but how intense is your love? The one thing God is not looking for is men and women skilled in the art of tooting their own horn. God doesn't look for men and women who write their own press releases. In fact, a lot of what the church looks for today, both in programs and people, run totally at odds with what the Scriptures teach are God's priorities.

What God is looking for, as we have often noted in this study of the fruit of the Spirit, is men and women who know they can do nothing. He is looking for believers who are so aware of the frailties that they become totally unaware of their strengths. The world calls it weakness. God calls it meekness. God gives that incredible quality to every man or woman, boy or girl, who ask Jesus Christ to dwell in their hearts. Granted, some of us never set it free. Some of us are so wrapped up in our mantles of self-sufficiency that we refuse to let this part of God's nature inhabit

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our lives the way God intended. But that is not the plan of God. That is not the plan of God at all.

What has happened is this. The world has goaded the church into acting like the world in order to attract the world; but when we do, they laugh themselves silly, because we're such cheap imitations. The world, you see, never would have let Jesus be born in a manger, ride on a donkey, or die on a cross; because the world never has understood humility, or meekness, or gentleness. It never will, because this world order has been fashioned by the very one who rebelled from the presence of God through the sin of pride and coaxed the first couple to do the same. One reason, I believe, that the world is so confused about Christianity is because we are so busy trying to out-world them, they never see the totally different, completely surrendered Body of Christ in action.

WHAT THE WORLD IS LOOKING FOR

We have something for which the world has no answer. They have no answer for perfect love. They have no answer for unadulterated joy. They have no answer for a peace that passes understanding. They have no answer for patience that knows no limits. They have no answer for kindness that gives itself away. They have no answer for goodness that abhors evil. They have no answer for faithful lives that remain in place no matter what. They especially have no answer for lives that demonstrate such meekness and humility that they never call attention to themselves, even when they are successful.

The world was simply never meant to be won by glitter and glamour. The world was meant to be won by salt and light. The message of the Gospel was never supposed to be known for its showmanship, but for its power. Christians were not to be showcases of physical talents, but demonstrations of lives so transformed from within that there would be no natural explanation, only the work of a supernatural God.

THE MAN OF MEEKNESS

So we come to the eighth of those wondrous qualities known as the fruit of the Spirit, which God has placed within us to magnify His Name. Though all of them have proved to be distinctly supernatural, none is more antagonistic to the natural man than this one.

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This quality of God's nature is the direct opposite of what both the world and the church call success. It is the spirit of meekness, humility, and gentleness. It is that aspect of God's personality that cradles itself in the bosom of the Father and seeks no recognition of its own. It is the believer in the shadows of life, where the beauty of God's Holiness can shine without competition. It is the Christian on the stage of life with no self-imposed spotlights, no flashing marquees, no drum rolls to precede his entrance. In fact, the only thing there is to call attention to him at all is the character of the God who made him. He seeks no applause, clamors for no power, and clings to no position except his position in Christ. He holds no press conferences lauding his church's accomplishments, raises no banners calling attention to his works or his goodness. In fact, he calls no attention to himself at all, because he is becoming increasingly unaware of himself.

Over and over, we see John the Baptist as his heart cries out: "He must increase; I must decrease." He is no longer waiting for God to use his talents. He is unmindful of his talents.

He is but available to be used in any way God chooses, on one of life's crosses, if God so chooses (and he would consider that the supreme honor).

He is not counting heads to see if his ministry is growing. He has no ministry. It's God's, and God can care for His work. He is not writing articles for the denomination's newsletter telling of the numbers of conversions or the number in Sunday School. He is not penning articles on "How I succeeded," because he has redefined success; and by his new definition, the word "I" has lost its meaning. He is the man of meekness. His life is a direct reflection of the One who defined meekness by His very life, the one who invited us this way:

Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.

Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle (meek) and humble (lowly) in heart; and YOU SHALL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. (Matthew 11:28,29 NAS)

He is "meek and lowly in heart". When God is free to be Himself in you and in me, we will be no less. Our pompous religiosity and our spiritual arrogance do not come from Him, Beloved. They come from the one who invented arrogance, the one who shouted in the face of His Creator, "I want to be like the Most High." Our

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incessant desire to be recognized comes from the one who hissed at Eve, “Don’t let anyone steal the show from you. You deserve the spotlight; you deserve equal billing.” So Eve stole the spotlight, and we’ve all been impressed with ourselves ever since.

A THREE-FOLD PROGRESSION

So we look in this lesson and the next at that three-fold diamond of the character of God, translated in most of our Bibles as “gentleness” or “meekness” or “humility”. It is the Greek word “praos” (πραος) or “praotes” (πραοτης), and while, on the surface, the fact that it is translated into slightly different English words, depending on your Bible, a deeper look will show us that this only amplifies and intensifies its meaning.

Vine defines the word this way:

An inwrought grace of the soul, the exercises of which are first and chiefly toward God. It goes on: It is that temper of spirit in which we accept His dealings with us as good; and therefore, without disputing or resisting. It is the humble heart, which as such, does not fight against God or contend or struggle against Him.

This meekness, being first a meekness before God, takes abuse at the hands of men, knowing these insults are allowed by God and employed by God to chasten and purify His own.

Bullinger defines the word:

meek, gentle: enduring all things with an even temper, free from haughty self sufficiency; tender of spirit.

Most who define it are quick to add that meekness is the opposite of weakness. It is a result of possessing infinite power; and thus it is not threatened by anything man can do. Meekness is Jesus in the face of Pilate.

“He could have called ten thousand angels to destroy the world, and set Him free” as the song so richly describes, but “He died alone for you and me”. Meekness. Jesus, wrapped in power, withholding that power for a higher good.

Andrew Murray defines it this way:

Humility is perfect quietness of heart. It is to expect nothing, to wonder at nothing that is done to me, to feel nothing done against me. It is to be at rest when nobody praises me, and when I am blamed or despised.

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The NIV defines the word as “gentleness”. The KJV uses “meekness”. Others define it as “humility”. To adequately put it into English, all three words are necessary, for it is a progressive sequence that begins with a right attitude toward God (meekness), progresses to a right attitude toward self (humility), and ends with a right attitude toward man and toward circumstances (gentleness).

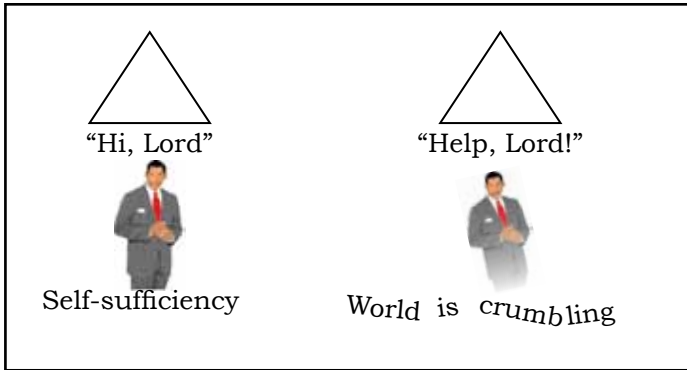
All are basically the same word, but with progressively widening circles that begin in our hearts, and eventually reach out and touch the world we live in. In diagram form, it looks like this:

A knowledge of God and the afflictions of life



It all begins, then, with a knowledge of God. That knowledge, when treated with the afflictions of life, develops meekness. In fact, the Hebrew word literally means: “that state of acknowledged absolute dependence on God that is the intended result of affliction.” The purpose of affliction is to create dependence. The purpose of dependence is to create meekness. This illustrates the point (see next page).

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Meekness defined: “an awareness of who God is that is so awesome that it reflects itself in absolute dependence upon God for everything, and thus is at rest in all situations.” It replaces our self-sufficient spirit that is casual in the presence of God and angry in the presence of difficulty, with deep reverence at the very mention of His Name.

The tool God uses to accomplish this miracle is called “affliction” or “testing”. By removing the platform of self-confidence beneath us, He watches our world crumble until our “Hi, Lord” turns to “Help, Lord”. Then we are ready to listen. Then we are ready to become meek.

Meekness, when allowed to do so, leads to humility—a right attitude toward self. For once you grasp who God is, and through affliction realize you can’t make it on your own, you begin to visualize yourself as Job did. He finally concluded, “I know that thou canst do every thing; and that no thought can be withholden from thee...I uttered things I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not...wherefore, I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”

Humility views self for what it is, worthless apart from God; invaluable when inhabited by God. Any departure from that mindset leaves you ripe for Satanic intrusion. Humility is the acknowledgment that you were not worthy even to be saved, apart from the divine grace of God. Therefore, you have no right to make demands, either of God or man. Instead, you view yourself as worthy only to become a servant. There you have a right definition of humility—the grateful acceptance of the role of servant, knowing that even that privilege is undeserved.

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When humility is released it turns into gentleness. Gentleness, rightly defined is the response of a humble man or woman to the injustices of others and to the apparent injustices in this world order. Gentleness is the end product of those who are meek in their relationship to God, and humble in their appraisal of themselves. They do not chafe at the abuses of others because, having become meek, they know they deserve no better; and having become humble, they understand that in their role as a servant they can expect abuse. They do not rail at God over life's inequities because they rightly understand the rights of a slave. Therefore, no matter what life sends them, or no matter how others treat them, they are at rest.

ISSUES TO ANSWER

That, Beloved, is the Mind of God at work in you. The fruit that the Spirit produces in you when He is allowed to be Himself will be meek toward God, humble toward self, and gentle toward men. It is that quality of God's nature that we will be looking at in this lesson and next. Our approach will be to ask ourselves a series of questions about the gentle spirit and ask the Scriptures to answer them.

Though we will only be able to deal with the first two in this lesson here are some of the questions we will be asking:

- 1- What does "the meek shall inherit the earth" mean?
- 2- What made Moses "the meekest man in all the world"?
- 3- Is affliction necessary to develop meekness?
- 4- Why did Jesus ride into Jerusalem on a colt?
- 5- Is meekness essential to a happy marriage?
- 6- Does meekness affect our testimony?
- 7- Must you be meek to properly reprove others?
- 8- Does a meek or humble spirit help in Bible Study?
- 9- Is there a relationship between meekness and joy?

These are a few of the issues we need to look at. Having determined the relationship between meekness, humility, and gentleness, we will use them almost interchangeably for the rest of the study, bearing in mind that any one without the others is always incomplete.

1- What does "the meek shall inherit the earth" mean?
The reference is found in Matthew 5:5, and is a quote from

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Psalm 37:11, which reads,

But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.

Most commentators agree that the meaning is several fold. It has a literal meaning, a physical meaning, and a spiritual meaning; but the spiritual meaning is that which makes the most sense. What it actually says is, “The meek shall be satisfied with, and thus possess, their inheritance.” That’s where the “abundance of peace” comes from. They are at rest, because apart from God they own nothing, deserve nothing, and covet nothing. Therefore, whatever God has given to them, they can possess. An inheritance may be granted to you by the courts, but until you acknowledge it and accept it, it is of no practical good.

But once you become meek, once you surrender to the sovereignty of God and humbly understand that you deserve nothing, then whatever God gives you makes you a millionaire. And once you become meek, you translate your understanding into the spirit world, and thus you are a millionaire, for you are an “heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ” of all the spiritual riches of the Kingdom.

The principle is how meek you are will be revealed by how content you are with your lot in life. You have already inherited the earth, both literally and figuratively. But if you cannot accept the terms of the inheritance unless it includes a better job, a newer house, a nicer car...then the meekness of God is not controlling your life. The meek one, remember, has come to the inescapable conclusion that he deserves nothing. Once that reality sets in, he suddenly possesses all things. He inherits the earth. That is one of the things that is so confusing to the world. They see the Christians of our day, and the church of our day, scrambling for the things of this world with more gusto than they do. They see churches mixing the two kingdoms in their theology to justify a prosperous lifestyle, all the while preaching a life of gracious charity. It makes no sense. They see Christians in the marketplace in a relentless search for success and prosperity, violating on Monday the very principles they preach on Sunday, in order to “get ahead”, and they are confused.

New Testament Christianity, which placed such emphasis on the world within and the world to come, and such commitment to giving your life away, seems to have vanished in a vapor of

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greed and selfishness. Unbelievers see no difference between us and them, except that we punctuate our quest for things at their expense with “Praise the Lords”. So long as we insist on “wanting what’s ours” and “demanding our rights”, we’re not meek. We’re not satisfied to be servants, who deserve nothing, and thank God minute by minute for everything we have. We’re not meek, so we’ve missed entering into the joy of our inheritance.

2- What made Moses the meekest man in all the world? We all look for visual examples when character is concerned, because we find the qualities too abstract, and thus justify our failure to become what we already are in Christ. There are two ways to bypass that temptation. One is to look at the life of Christ, who possessed all of the nature of God in human form, yet without sin. The other is to look for people in Scripture who, according to the word itself, possessed those qualities. In the case of meekness, or humility, or gentleness, we have both. We read:

...Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men
which were upon the face of the earth. (Numbers 12:3)

Now, unlike us, the Scriptures do not exaggerate. Whatever they say is true...period. God said, through the Holy Spirit, written, strangely enough, by Moses’ own hand, that this man was not only meek, but that he was literally the meekest man in all the earth. You may ask, but if Moses wrote about his own meekness, isn’t that a bit like wearing a badge saying “I’m humble”?

No for two reasons. One, Moses didn’t write this, God did.

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of
any private interpretation.

For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man:
but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy
Ghost (Spirit). (II Peter 1:20,21)

Moses was only God’s fountain pen, not his source of information. Secondly, we must remember the meaning of meekness. Moses was the meekest man in all the world, because he was more dependent on God than any other man alive. That is meekness, remember? It is a right attitude toward God that surrenders to His Sovereignty, becoming totally dependent on Him. That was Moses. So it wasn’t false humility for Moses to acknowledge that he was meek. His meekness made him humble; his humility made him gentle. But he could take no credit for it; so to say that he was meek was only to glorify God the more...for

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no man knew his own inabilities more than Moses (see Exodus 3).

The issues then, are how content are you with your lot in life, and how dependent are you on God for your every breath? If you think God needs your talents, your know-how, your expertise, your charisma, or anything else, you're not meek. If you're not meek, you'll never be humble, and until you become humble, you'll never have a gentle spirit. Unless you develop a gentle spirit, you'll never make a real impact on the world in which you live. You will rather be a cheap imitation of what the world has already proved is worthless.

What then, does God need in these latter days? He needs men and women who, in the midst of a "can do" generation, know that apart from God, they are not the ones who can. He needs men and women who are so content with who they are, with how God made them, with what God has given them, and with how God is using them, that the very thought of accusing God of being unfair would be sheer blasphemy. He needs men and women of meekness, who will let that meekness make them humble; and who, in their humility, will minister to a brash, proud, arrogant world with such a gentle, winsome spirit, that the world will stand in awe.

They will stand in awe because they will have seen the nature of God. They will have literally seen, in human form, the Spirit of Him who said of Himself, "I am meek and lowly in heart." They will have seen *meekness personified*, for they will have seen Christ in you.

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